

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 EB-07 AGRE-00 CEA-01 CIAE-00

DODE-00 FRB-03 H-01 INR-07 INT-05 L-03 LAB-04

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 EPG-02 AID-05 SS-15 STR-04

ITC-01 TRSE-00 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 OMB-01

ACDA-07 CEQ-01 CG-00 DLOS-09 DOTE-00 EPA-01

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SUBJECT: SOVIET CAVIAR HARVEST REPORTED OFF IN 1977

1. ARNOLD HANSEN-STURM, PRESIDENT, ROMANOFF CAVIAR CORP. (TEANECK, NEW JERSEY), TOLD COMATT JULY 1 THAT STURGEON CATCH IN CASPIAN SEA THUS FAR THIS YEAR HAD BEEN "WELL DOWN" FROM 1976 LEVELS. HE SAID THAT ALTHOUGH HE HAD BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN BUYING SOME 1.5 METRIC TONS FROM FTO PRODINTORG ON CURRENT BUYING TRIP (HANSEN-STURM CLAIMED THAT ROMANOFF BOUGHT NEARLY ALL SOVIET CAVIAR SOLD IN U.S. ANNUALLY) THIS BARELY MET FIRM'S "NEEDS" GIVEN CURRENT DEMAND IN U.S. ACCORDING TO HANSEN-STURM, ROMANOFF CAVIAR HAS A STANDING ORDER WITH SOVIETS FOR 25 METRIC TONS THIS YEAR. HERETOFORE, ROMANOFF HAD BEEN BUYING NINETY PERCENT OF ITS CAVIAR FROM IRAN AND ONLY TEN PERCENT FROM USSR, BUT FALL-OFF IN CASPIAN CATCH THIS YEAR HAS FORCED FIRM TO LOOK TO SOVIETS FOR MORE CAVIAR WITH RESULT THAT MIX IS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CHANGING: IN FUTURE FIRM EXPECTS TO IMPORT NEARLY HALF OF ITS CAVIAR FROM USSR.

2. HANSEN-STURM SAID THAT WHOLESALE PRICES OF CAVIAR WERE SKYROCKETING, FROM \$95.00 PER POUND SEVERAL MONTHS AGO, TO \$125.00 PER POUND TODAY. HE EXPECTED THAT WITHIN TWO MONTHS PRICE WOULD BE AROUND \$150.00 PER POUND WHOLESALE.

AND AS MUCH AS \$200.00 PER POUND RETAIL IN U.S. HE SPECULATED THAT SOVIETS MAY BE HOLDING CAVIAR OFF THE MARKET IN ORDER TO JACK PRICES UP FURTHER, BUT ADMITTED HE HAD NO CERTAIN KNOWLEDGE OR EVEN RUMORED INFORMATION TO SUPPORT HIS CONJECTURE.

3. ON RELATED SUBJECT, HANSEN-STURM TOLD COMATT THAT, APART FROM CAVIAR, ROMANOFF WAS INTERESTED IN BUYING OTHER TINNED FISH PRODUCTS FROM CASPIAN SEA, BUT NEW U.W. CANNED FOOD REGULATIONS WERE TOO STIFF TO OPEN MANY POSSIBILITIES FOR SALE OF SOVIET CANNED FISH PRODUCTS IN U.S. UNDER ROMANOFF CAVIAR'S SPONSORSHIP, SOVIETS INTEND TO SEND SOME FISH AND PACKING INDUSTRY EXPERTS TO U.S. AT AN UNSPECIFIED FUTURE TIME TO STUDY THIS PROBLEM.

4. COMMENT: WE NOTE THAT U.S. IMPORTS OF STURGEON ROE (TSUSA 113.3000) HAVE GROWN FROM LESS THAN \$50,000 IN 1974 TO NEARLY \$600,000 IN 1976, WITH SOME \$85,000 HAVING BEEN IMPORTED THROUGH APRIL OF THIS YEAR. ALTHOUGH NOT AN IMPORTANT HARD CURRENCY EARNER INsofar AS U.S. IS CONCERNED, SOVIETS WILL BE KEENLY INTERESTED IN MAINTAINING WESTERN MARKET FOR CAVIAR AND INCREASING THEIR REVENUES THEREFROM. PROBLEM FOR CAVIAR INDUSTRY IS THAT THERE IS MONEY TO BE MADE IN CASPIAN OIL, TOO, AND ONLY WAY TO INCREASE PRODUCTION OF THAT COMMODITY IS TO DRILL MORE HOLES IN BOTTOM OF SEA -- WHICH INCREASED BOTH ACTUAL AND POTENTIAL OCCURENCES OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WATER POLLUTION, THE CHIEF CAUSE OF FISH-KILL. IN SEEKING SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEM OF WATER POLLUTION IN CASPIAN SEA, SOVIETS ARE EXPERIMENTING WITH BIOLOGICAL MICRO-ORGANISMS WHICH FEED ON PETROLEUM-BASED POLLUTANTS. UPON THEIR SUCCESS THIS AND SIMILAR POLLUTION CONTROL ENDEAVORS, RESTS MUCH OF FUTURE SOVIET CAVIAR INDUSTRY. END COMMENT.
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